CHINESE PAINTERS

RAPHAEL PETRUCCI

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CHINESE PAINTERS

CHINESE PAINTERS

A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

RAPHAEL PETRUCCI

TRANSLATED BY

FRANCES SEAVER

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE BY

LAURENCE BINYON

OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

AND WITH TWENTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS IN DUOTONE

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PREFACE

A TRANSLATOR can have but one aim — to present the thought of the author faithfully. In this case an added responsibility is involved, since one who had so much to give to the world has been taken in his prime. M. Petrucci has written at length of art in the Far East in his exhaustive work *La Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art d'Extrême Orient* and elsewhere, and has demonstrated the wide scope of his thought and learning. The form and style in *Peintres Chinois* are the result of much condensation of material and have thus presented problems in translation, to which earnest thought has been given.

In deference to the author's wish the margin has not been overladen and only a short tribute, by one able to speak of him from personal knowledge, has been included, together with a few footnotes and a short bibliography of works of reference indespensable to the student who will pursue this absorbing study. The translator takes this opportunity to make grateful acknowledgement of her debt to the authors named, who have made such valuable information available, and to those friends who have read the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions.

FRANCES SEAVER

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

IN Raphael Petrucci, who died early in 1917, the world has lost one of the ablest and most devoted students and interpreters of the art of the Far East. He was only forty-five years of age, in the prime of his powers, brimming with energy and full of enterprises that promised richly. Though he did not die in the field, he was none the less a victim of the war. He had exhausted himself by his labours with the Belgian ambulances at La Panne, for Belgium was his adopted country. He had a house in Brussels, filled with a collection of Chinese and Japanese art, and a little cottage near the coast just over the borders of Holland. He came of the great and ancient Sienese family of the Petrucci, but his mother was French and he spent much of his earlier life in Paris, before settling in Brussels and marrying one of the daughters of the painter Verwée. He had also spent some time in Russia. In Brussels he was attached to the Institut Solvay.

He was a man of science, a student of and writer on sociology and biology. He lectured on art and had a knowledge of the art of the world which few men in Europe rivalled. He wrote a philosophic novel, *La Porte de l'Amour et de la Mort*, which has run through

several editions. He published a book on Michelangelo's poetry. At the same time he was a scientific engineer. When war broke out Petrucci was on his way home from Italy, where he had been engaged, I believe, on some large engineering project and he only got out of Switzerland into France by the last train which left Basle. He came to England for a time, looking after a number of Belgian refugees, including some very distinguished artists. At the end of 1914 he was engaged by the India office to do some valuable work in London on the collection of Chinese and Tibetan paintings brought back from Tun-huang by Sir Aurel Stein. He then worked at La Panne for the Belgian army hospital (he had had a medical training in his youth), went to Provence for a rest, fell ill and died in Paris after an operation.

Raphael Petrucci was a man who seemed to reincarnate the boundless curiosity and the various ability of the men of the Italian Renaissance. But for some years before his death he had concentrated his powers chiefly on the study of Oriental art, of the Chinese language, and of Buddhist iconography. His most important work in this line is *La Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art d'Extrême Orient*, a sumptuously printed folio published by Laurens in Paris, with illustrations by the *Kokka* Company, and written with as much charm as insight. Petrucci's knowledge of Chinese gave him an authority in interpreting Chinese art which writers on the subject have rarely combined

with so much understanding of art in general, though as a connoiseur he was sometimes over-sanguine. His translation from a classic of Chinese art-criticism, originally published in a learned magazine, has lately appeared in book form. With his friend, Professor Chavannes, whose death, also in the prime of life, we have had to deplore still more recently, Petrucci edited the first volume of the splendid series *Ars Asiatica*. The present work, intended for the general reader and lover of art, illustrates his gift for luminous condensation and the happy treatment of a large theme.

A man of winning manners, a most generous and loyal friend, Petrucci wore his manifold learning lightly; with immense energy and force of character, he was simple and warm-hearted and interested in the small things as well as the great things of life.

LAURENCE BINYON

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* Now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss.

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INTRODUCTION

WHATEVER its outward expression, human thought remains essentially unchanged and, throughout all of its manifestations, is fundamentally the same. Varying phases are but accidents and underneath the divers wrappings of historic periods or different civilizations, the heart as well as the mind of man has been moved by the same desires.

Art possesses a unity like that of nature. It is profound and stirring, precisely because it blends and perpetuates feeling and intelligence by means of outward expressions. Of all human achievements art is the most vital, the one that is dowered with eternal youth, for it awakens in the soul emotions which neither time nor civilization has ever radically altered. Therefore, in commencing the study of an art of strange appearance, what we must seek primarily is the exact nature of the complexity of ideas and feelings upon which it is based. Such is the task presented to us, and since the problem which we here approach is the general study of Chinese

painting, we must prepare ourselves first to master the peculiarities of its appearance and technique, in order to understand later on the motives which inspired it.

While the first part of this study will carry us far from our habitual modes of thought, the second part will bring us back into a domain which our own philosophies, sciences and arts have already made familiar. Admittedly, Chinese painting is governed by distinctive ideas. Born of a civilization vastly different from our own, it may at times appear in a guise that seems incomprehensible. It would be astonishing, however, if Western intelligence were unable to grasp an aesthetic code of a magnitude which is too great to be ignored.

The progress of history and of criticism has given us the opportunity to reach a comprehension of the most peculiar formulas. Our culture is sufficiently broad to allow us to perceive the beauty of an Egyptian fresco or an Assyrian bas-relief as well as of a Byzantine mosaic or a painting of the Renaissance. We have therefore no excuse for remaining inaccessible to the art of the Far East and we have surely all the mental vigor that is requisite in order to accustom ourselves to the foreign nature of its presentation. It is in the realm of painting that this foreign element is most noticeable. This is due partly to a special technique and partly to the nature of the doctrines which serve as its inspiration.

It behooves us then to acquaint ourselves with these new aspects of the human soul. That is the justification for this little book. It forms an introduction in which gaps are shown without attempt at concealment and is presented in all modesty.

PART ONE
TECHNIQUE

I. EQUIPMENT OF THE PAINTER

WHERE our painters have chosen wood or canvas as a ground, the Chinese have employed silk or paper. While our art recognizes that drawing itself, quite apart from painting, is a sufficient objective, drawing and painting have always been closely intermingled in the Far East. While the mediums used in Europe for painting in color, distemper, tempera and oil, led to an exact study of form, the colors employed by the Orientals — at times brilliant, at times subdued with an almost studied restraint — preserved a singular fluidity and lent themselves to undefined evanescences which gave them a surprising charm.

The early paintings were generally done on cotton, coarse silk or paper. In the eighth century, under the T'ang dynasty, the use of finer silk began. The dressing was removed with boiling water, the silk was then sized and smoothed with a paddle. The use of silken fabric of the finest weave, prepared with a thick sizing, became general during the Sung dynasty. Papers were made of vegetable fibres, principally of bamboo. Being prepared, as was the silk, with a sizing of alum, they became practically inde-

structible. Upon these silks and papers the painter worked with brush and Chinese ink,[1] color being introduced with more or less freedom or restraint.

The brushes are of different types. Each position of the brush conforms to a specific quality of the line, either sharp and precise or broad and quivering, the ink spreading in strong touches or thinning to delicate shades.

The colors are simple, of mineral or vegetable origin. Chinese painters have always avoided mixing colors so far as possible. From malachite they obtained several shades of green, from cinnabar or sulphide of mercury, a number of reds. They knew also how to combine mercury, sulphur and potash to produce vermilion. From peroxide of mercury they drew coloring powders which furnished shades ranging from brick red to orange yellow. During the T'ang dynasty coral was ground to secure a special red, while white was extracted from burnt oyster shells. White lead was later substituted for this lime white. Carmine lake they obtained from madder, yellows from the sap of the rattan, blues from indigo. To these must

[1] Chinese ink is a very different composition from the ink of Western countries. It is a solid made of soot obtained by burning certain plants, which is then combined with glue or oil and moulded into a cake and dried. Other ingredients may be added to produce sheen or a dead finish. It improves with age if properly kept. The cake is moistened and rubbed on a slab, and the ink thus obtained must be used in a special way and with special care to produce the full effect. — TRANSLATOR.

PLATE I. SCULPTURED STONES OF THE HAN DYNASTY

Second to Third Centuries. Rubbings taken by the Chavannes Expedition.

be added the different shades of Chinese ink and lastly, gold in leaf and in powder.

The brush-stroke in the painting of the Far East is of supreme importance. We know that this could not be otherwise if we recall that the characters in Chinese writing are ideographs, not actually *written*, but rather *drawn*. The stroke is not a mere formal, lifeless sign. It is an expression in which is reflected the beauty of the thought that inspired it as well as the quality of the soul of him who gives it form. In writing, as in painting, it reveals to us the character and the conception of its author. Placed at the service of certain philosophical ideas, which will be set forth later on, this technique was bound to lead to a special code of Aesthetics. The painter seeks to suggest with an unbroken line the fundamental character of a form. His endeavor, in this respect, is to simplify the objective images of the world to the extreme, replacing them with ideal images, which prolonged meditation shall have freed from every non-essential. It may therefore be readily understood how the brush-stroke becomes so personal a thing, that in itself it serves to reveal the hand of the master. There is no Chinese book treating of painting which does not discuss and lay stress upon the value of its aesthetic code.

II. REPRESENTATION OF FORMS

IT has often been said that in Chinese painting, as in Japanese painting, perspective is ignored. Nothing is further from the truth. This error arises from the fact that we have confused one system of perspective with perspective as a whole. There are as many systems of perspective as there are conventional laws for the representation of space.

The practice of drawing and painting offers the student the following problem in descriptive geometry: *to represent the three dimensions of space by means of a plane surface of two dimensions.* The Egyptians and Assyrians solved this problem by throwing down vertical objects upon one plane, which demands a great effort of abstraction on the part of the observer. European perspective, built up in the fifteenth century upon the remains of the geometric knowledge of the Greeks, is based on the monocular theory used by the latter. In this system, it is assumed that the picture is viewed with the eye fixed on a single point. Therefore the conditions of foreshortening — or distorting the actual dimensions according to the angle from which they are seen — are governed by placing in harmony the distance of the eye from the scheme of the

PLATE II. PORTION OF A SCROLL BY KU K'AI-CHIH

British Museum, London.

picture, the height of the eye in relation to the objects to be depicted, and the relative position of these objects with reference to the surface employed.

But, in assuming that the picture is viewed with the eye fixed on a single point, we put ourselves in conditions which are not those of nature. The European painter must therefore compromise with the exigencies of binocular vision, modify the too abrupt fading of forms and, in fine, evade over-exact principles. Thus he arrives at a *perspective de sentiment*, which is the one used by our masters.

Chinese perspective was formulated long before that of the Europeans and its origins are therefore different. It was evolved in an age when the method of superimposing different registers to indicate different planes was still being practiced in bas-reliefs. The succession of planes, one above the other, when codified, led to a system that was totally different from our monocular perspective. It resulted in a perspective as seen from a height. No account is taken of the habitual height of the eye in relation to the picture. The line of the horizon is placed very high, parallel lines, instead of joining at the horizon, remain parallel, and the different planes range one above the other in such a way that the glance embraces a vast space. Under these conditions, the picture becomes either high and narrow — a hanging picture — to show the successive planes, or broad in the form of a scroll, unrolling to reveal an endless

panorama. These are the two forms best known under their Japanese names of *kakemono* and *makimono*.[1]

But the Chinese painter must attenuate the forms where they are parallel, give a natural appearance to their position on different levels and consider the degree of their reduction demanded by the various planes. Even he must compromise with binocular vision and arrive at a *perspective de sentiment* which, like our own, while scientifically false, is artistically true. To this linear perspective is added moreover an atmospheric perspective.

Having elected from a very early time to paint in monochrome, Chinese painters were led by the nature of this medium to seek to express atmospheric perspective by means of tone values and harmony of shading instead of by color. Thus they were familiar with chiaroscuro before the European painters. Wang Wei established the principles of atmospheric perspective in the eighth century. He explains how tints are graded, how the increasing thickness of layers of air deprives distant objects of their true coloring, substituting a bluish tinge, and how forms become indistinct in proportion as their distance from the observer increases. His testimony in this respect is similar to that of Leonardo da Vinci in his "Treatise on Painting."

[1] The Chinese terms are *Li Chou* for a vertical painting and *Hêng P'i* for a horizontal painting. — TRANSLATOR.

PLATE III. KWANYIN. EIGHTH TO TENTH CENTURIES

Painting brought from Tun-huang by the Pelliot Expedition. The Louvre, Paris.

III. DIVISION OF SUBJECTS

THE Chinese divide the subjects of painting into four principal classes, as follows:

Landscape.
Man and Objects.
Flowers and Birds.
Plants and Insects.

Nowhere do we see a predominant place assigned to the drawing or painting of the human figure. This alone is sufficient to mark the wide difference between Chinese and European painting.

The exact name for *Landscape* is translated by the words *mountain and water picture.* They recall the ancient conception of Creation on which the Oriental system of the world is founded. The mountain exemplifies the teeming life of the earth. It is threaded by veins wherein waters continuously flow. Cascades, brooks and torrents are the outward evidence of this inner travail. By its own superabundance of life, it brings forth clouds and arrays itself in mists, thus being a manifestation of the two principles which rule the life of the universe.

The second class, *Man and Objects,* must be understood principally as concerning man, his works, his

belongings, and, in a general sense, all things created by the hand of man, in combination with landscape. This was the convention in early times when the first painters whose artistic purpose can be formulated with certainty, portrayed the history of the legendary beings of Taoism, — the genii and fairies dwelling amidst an imaginary Nature. The records tell us, to be sure, that the early masters painted portraits, but it was at a later period that *Man and Objects* composed a class distinct from *Landscape*, a period responsible for those ancestral portraits painted after death, which are almost always attributable to ordinary artisans. Earlier they endeavored to apply to figure painting the methods, technique and laws established for an ensemble in which the thought of nature predominated. Special rules bearing on this subject are sometimes found of a very early date but there is no indication that they were collected into a definite system until the end of the seventeenth century. Up to the present time our only knowledge of their content is through a small treatise published at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The third class, *Flowers and Birds*, deals with those paintings wherein the Chinese gave rein to their fancy for painting the bird in conjunction with the plant life associated with its home and habits. The bird is treated with a full understanding of its life, and flowers are studied with such a comprehension of their essential structure that a botanist can readily

PLATE IV. PALACE OF KIU CHENG-KUNG BY LI CHAO-TAO
T'ang Period. Collection of V. Goloubew.

detect the characteristics typical of a species, despite the simplifications which an artist always imposes on the complexity of forms.

This general class is subdivided. The epidendrum, the iris, the orchis and the chrysanthemum became special studies each of which had its own masters, both from the standpoint of painting itself, and of the application of the aesthetic rules which govern this art. The bamboo and the plum tree are also allied to this class. Under the influence of philosophic and symbolic ideas they furnished a special category of subjects to the imagination of the painter and form a division apart which has its own laws and methods, regarding which the Chinese treatises on Aesthetics inform us fully.

Finally, the fourth class, *Plants and Insects*, is based upon the same conception as that of *Flowers and Birds*. The insect is represented with the plant which is his habitat when in the stage of caterpillar and larva, or flying above the flowers and plants upon which he subsists on reaching the stage of butterfly and insect. Certain books add to this fourth class a subdivision comprising fishes.

Lastly we must note that in the Far East, as in Europe, there is a special class to be taken into consideration, *Religious paintings*. In China, this refers almost exclusively to Buddhist paintings.

IV. INSPIRATION

THE aesthetic conceptions of the Far East have been deeply influenced by a special philosophy of nature. The Chinese consider the relation of the two principles, male and female, the *yang* and the *yin*, as the source of the universe. Detached from the primordial unity, they give birth to the forms of this world by ever varying degrees of combination. Heaven corresponds to the male principle, earth to the female principle. Everything upon the earth, beings, plants, animals or man is formed by the mingling of *yang* and *yin*. While the mountain, enveloped in mists, recalls the union of these two principles, the legend of forces thus revealed by no means pauses here. Fabulous or real, the animals and plants habitually seen in Chinese paintings express a like conception.

The dragon is the ancestor of everything that bears feathers or scales. He represents the element of water, the waters of the earth, the mists of the air, the heavenly principle. He is seen breaking through the clouds like some monstrous apparition, unveiling for an instant the greatness of a mystery barely discerned. The tiger is the symbol of the earthly prin-

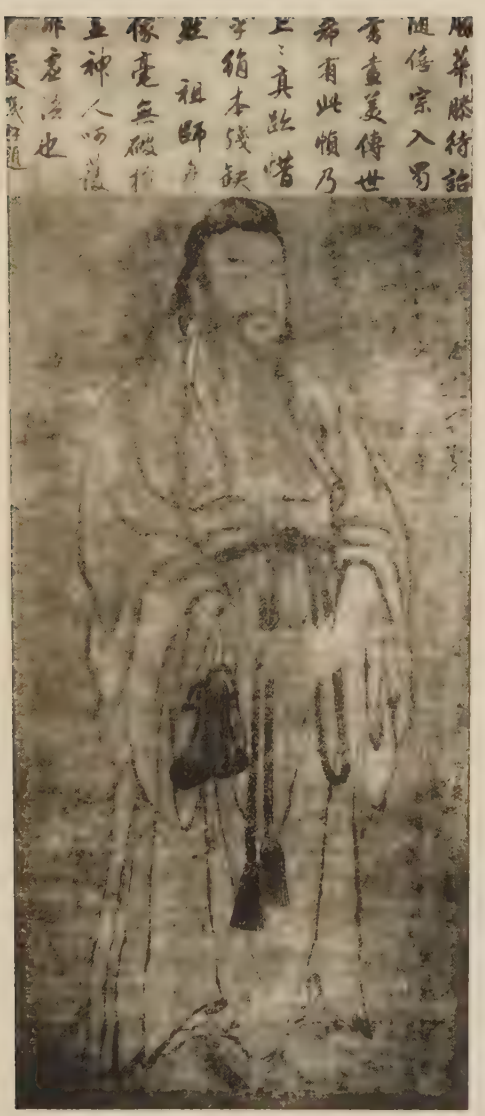

PLATE V. PORTRAIT OF LÜ TUNG-PING BY T'ÊNG CH'ANG-YU

T'ang Period. Collection of August Jaccaci. Lent to the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

ciple, a personification of quadrupeds as distinct from birds and reptiles. His ferocious form lurks in the tempest. Defying the hurricane which bends the bamboos and uproots trees, he challenges the furies of nature that are hostile to the expression of the universal soul. The bamboo is the symbol of wisdom, the pine is the emblem of will-power and life. The plum tree in flower is a harmonious combination of the two principles. It symbolizes virginal purity.

Thus is built up a complete system of allusions similar to the allegories of our own classics but superior in that they never degenerate into frozen symbols, but on the contrary keep in close touch with nature, investing her with a vibrant life, in which human consciousness vanishes making way for the dawning consciousness of infinitude.

Buddhism goes still further. It does not even believe in the reality of the world. In this belief, forms are but transitory, the universe an illusion forever flowing into an unending future. Outside of the supreme repose, in the six worlds of desire,[1] the things that are susceptible to pain and death pursue their evolution. Souls travel this closed cycle under the most diverse forms, from hell to the gods, advancing or retreating, in accordance with the good deeds or errors

[1] These are: the worlds of animals, of man, of gods or *dêvas*, of giants or *asuras*, of *prêtas* or wandering spirits, and of hells. Freedom from perpetual transmigration in these six worlds is attained only through the extinction of desire.

committed in previous existences. A stone, a plant, an insect, a demon, or a god are only illusory forms, each encompassing an identical soul on its way to deliverance, as it is caught at different stages of its long calvary and imprisoned through original sin and the instinctive desire for life. Whence we see emerging a new feeling of charity which embraces all beings. Their moral character is felt to be the same as that of man, their goal is the same, and in the vast world of illusion each seeks to fulfill the same destiny.

Behind the changes of the universe the Buddhist perceives the primal substance that pervades all creation. There results from this an intimacy with things which exists in no other creed. From inert matter to the most highly organized being, all creation is thus endowed with a sense of kinship that is destined to make a tender and stirring appeal in the artist's interpretation of nature.

PART TWO

THE EVOLUTION OF CHINESE PAINTING

I. ORIGINS

THE origins of painting in China are mingled with the origins of writing. Written characters are, in fact, derived from pictography or picture writing, those in use at the present time being only developed and conventionalized forms of primitive drawings. The early books and dictionaries give us definite information regarding this evolution. But while history bears witness to this ancient connection, we do not come into contact with actual evidence until the third century of our era, through the bas-reliefs of the Han dynasty, and in the fourth century through the paintings of Ku K'ai-chih. Here we find by no means the origin of an evolution but, on the contrary, the last traces of an expiring tradition.

II. BEFORE THE INTERVENTION OF BUDDHISM

THE bas-reliefs of the Han dynasty are almost all comprised in the sculptured stone slabs embellishing mortuary chambers and of these the artistic merit is most unequal.[1] Their technique is primitive. It consists in making the contours of figures by cutting away the stone in grooves with softened angles, leaving the figure in silhouette. Engraved lines complete the drawing.

The subjects are sometimes mythical and sometimes legendary. There are representations of divinities, fabulous animals, scenes of war and of the chase and processions of people bearing tribute. At times the great compositions display imposing spectacles, a luxurious and refined array. Now and then attempts at pictorial perspective are joined to some unrelated scene.

All this is in direct conflict with the technique of bas-reliefs and leads to the surmise that the models

[1] These bas-reliefs have been studied by M. Chavannes in "La sculpture sur pierre en Chine au temps des deux dynasties Han," Paris, 1893; also in "Mission archéologique en Chine," Paris, 1910. Rubbings taken from the sculptured slabs are reproduced here in full.

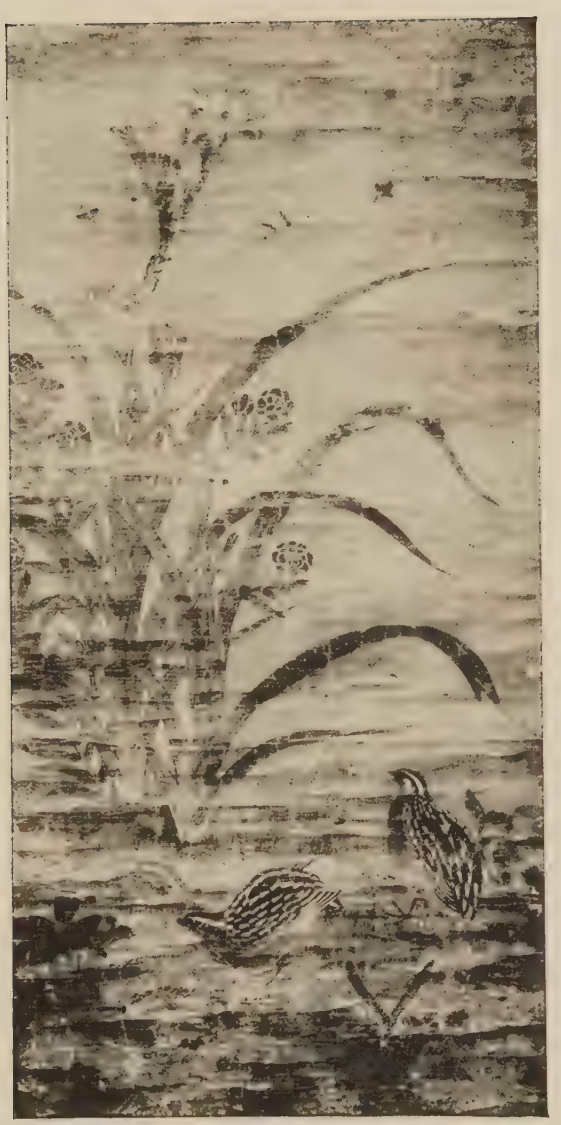

PLATE VI. PAINTING BY AN UNKNOWN ARTIST

T'ang Period. Collection of R. Petrucci.

were drawn by painters and copied with more or less skill by makers of funeral monuments.

This impression is confirmed if certain carved slabs are compared with a painting by Ku K'ai-chih, of which we can judge by means of a copy made in the Sung period.[1] One of the scenes of this long scroll leaves no possible misapprehension as to the pictorial origin of the Han bas-reliefs. Its subject, a river god on a chariot drawn by dragons, is similar in composition to the models used by the artisans of the third century.

We have, however, better testimony than a copy made at a later period. The British Museum, in London, is the owner of a painting attributed to Ku K'ai-chih. The reasons impelling us to believe in its authenticity are weighty, almost indisputable.[2]* We therefore accept it here and will endeavor to define the work of one of the greatest painters of China in the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century.

[1] This painting formed part of the collection of the ex-viceroy Tuan Fang, killed in 1911, during the revolution. It was published in 1911 by the Japanese archeologist, Mr. Taki.

[2] These reasons are set forth in a work which Mr. Laurence Binyon is preparing, to accompany a reproduction engraved by Japanese artists for the British Museum.

* The preceding footnote refers to a work published in 1913 by the Trustees of the British Museum, containing a reproduction of the painting in its entirety and giving a full description. — TRANSLATOR.

The painted scenes are inspired by a work of the third century containing admonitions addressed to the ladies of the imperial palace. The striking characteristics of these compositions are the lightness and delicacy of style, the poetry of the attitudes and the supreme elegance of the forms. Heavy black tresses frame the ivory faces with refined and subtle charm. The voluptuous caprice of garments in long floating folds, the extreme perfection of the figures and the grace of gestures make this painting a thing of unique beauty. Only through the cultivation of centuries could such spiritual insight be attained.

If the copy from the collection of Tuan Fang recalls the bas-reliefs of the Han period, the painting in the British Museum is related to the bas-reliefs of Long-men, which date from the seventh century and of which M. Chavannes has published photographs. Therefore we may say that the style of Ku K'ai-chih exemplifies the distinctive features of Chinese painting at a period extending from the third to the seventh centuries.[1]

It should also be noted that toward the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, the painter

[1] A copy of an engraving on stone of the year 1095, representing "Confucius sitting amidst his disciples" and another representing "Confucius walking, followed by one of his disciples," dated 1118, have been published by M. de Chavannes ("Mission archéologique en Chine," Nos. 869 and 871). The latter is considered as having been undoubtedly executed after a painting by Ku K'ai-chih.

PLATE VII. GEESE

Sung Period. British Museum, London.

and critic Hsieh Ho formulated the Six Canons [1] upon which the far-eastern code of Aesthetics is founded. These Canons introduce philosophical conceptions and technical knowledge which also presuppose long cultivation, for it is only after rules have been brought to reality in a work of art that they are formulated into a code. Therefore when Buddhism appeared in China it found there a native art whose value was proved beyond question by a long succession of masterpieces. After having exhausted every manifestation of strength and vigor, this art had arrived at expressions of extreme refinement and profound and appealing charm, closely verging on the disquieting dreams of decadence.

[1] Interpretations of the Six Canons by five authorities are accessible in a very convenient form for comparison in Mr. Laurence Binyon's "Flight of the Dragon," p. 12. — TRANSLATOR.

III. THE INTERVENTION OF BUDDHISM

CHINESE books state that between the fourth and the eighth centuries "the art of painting *man and things* underwent a vital change." By this they alluded to the intervention of Buddhist art, which made its appearance in China toward the fifth century in the form of the Graeco-Indian art of Gandhara, already modified by its transit across Eastern Turkestan. This by no means indicates that purely Indian origins might not be found for it. At Sanchi, as well as in Central India and at Ajantâ such characteristics are preserved. But the Greek dynasties which had settled in northwestern India in the train of Alexander, had carried with them the canons of Hellenistic art. The technique and methods of this art were placed at the service of the new religion. They gave to Buddhist art — which was just beginning to appear in the Gandharian provinces — its outward form, its type of figures, its range of personages and the greater part of its ornamentation.[1]

[1] See Foucher, "L'Art gréco-bouddique du Gandhara." Paris, Leroux.

Buddhism found the expiring Hellenistic formula which had been swept beyond its borders, ready at hand at the very moment the new religion was gathering itself together for that prodigious journey which, traversing the entire Far East, was to lead it to the shores of the Pacific. Once outside of India, it came into contact with Sassanian Persia and Bactria. With Hellenistic influences were mingled confused elements springing from the scattered civilizations which had reigned over the Near East. Thence it spread to the byways of Eastern Turkestan.

We know today, thanks to excavations of the German expeditions of Grünwedel and von Lecoq, the two English expeditions of Sir Aurel Stein and the French expedition of M. Pelliot, that in that long chain of oases filled with busy cities, Buddhist art was gradually formed into the likeness under which it was to appear as a finished product in the Far East. Here it developed magnificently. The enormous frescoes of Murtuq display imposing arrangements of those figures of Buddhas and Bôdhisatvas which were to remain unchanged in the plastic formulas of China and Japan. Meanwhile conflicting influences continued to be felt. Sometimes the Indian types prevailed, as at Khotan, at others there were Semitic types and elements originating in Asia Minor, such as were found at Miran, and at length, as at Tun-huang, types that were almost entirely Chinese appeared.

The paintings brought from Tun-huang by the Stein and Pelliot expeditions enable us to realize the nature of the characteristics which contact with China imposed upon Buddhist art. It had no choice but to combine with the tendencies revealed in the painting of Ku K'ai-chih. The painter trained in the school of Hellenistic technique drew with the brush. He delighted in the rhythmic movement of the line and the display of a transcendent harmony and elegance of proportion such as are seen in the frescoes of Eastern Turkestan. Perhaps through contact with China — herself searching for new expressions — but probably through a combination of the two influences, Buddhist painting, at the opening of the T'ang dynasty, gives us heavier types in which compact and powerful figures take on a new character.

From then on we perceive the nature of the great change to which the early books refer. Chinese painting had already known the genii and fairies of Taoism, the Rishi or wizards living in mountain solitudes, the Immortals dwelling in distant isles beyond the sea. It now knew gods wrapped in the ecstatic contemplation of Nirvana, with smiling mouth and half-closed eyes, revealing mystic symbols in a broad and apostolic gesture. It had more life-like figures, attendants, benign and malignant, terrifying demons. Before these impassive gods, in a fervor of devotion it bent the figures of donors, men and women, sometimes veritable portraits. With even greater breadth

it portrayed the disciples of Sakyamuni, those anchorites and hermits who under the name of Lohan [1] have entered into Chinese Buddhist legend. Indian priests with harsh, strongly marked features and wrinkled faces, preachers of a foreign race, disfigured by scourging or else the calm full visage of the ecstatic in contemplation, — such are the types that appeared. Chinese painters took up the new subjects and treated them with a freedom, an ease, and a vitality which at once added an admirable chapter to the history of art.

[1] Indian *Arhat;* Japanese *Rakan.* — TRANSLATOR

IV. THE T'ANG PERIOD—SEVENTH TO TENTH CENTURIES

THE T'ang dynasty was the really vital period of Chinese Buddhism. Among the painters who gave it its highest expression Wu Tao-tzŭ holds first place. His memory dwells in history as that of one of the greatest masters in China and legend has still further enhanced the might of his genius. It is highly probable that his work is entirely destroyed, but by the aid of copies, incised stones and wood engravings of the twelfth century, an idea of the painter's conception can be formed. He seems to have been the creator of a Chinese type of Kwanyin, the Buddhist incarnation of mercy and charity. Drapery covers the high drawn hair. She is attired in the harmonious folds of a plain and ample garment and expresses supreme authority, the sublimity of divine love.

If to these fragments of an immense plastic production is added the analysis furnished by the written records, we can define with some degree of certitude the place occupied by Wu Tao-tzŭ in the history of Chinese painting. The books state that the lines from his brush fairly vibrated; all united in marvelling at the spirituality emanating from forms thus

PLATE VIII. WHITE EAGLE. SUNG PERIOD

Collection of R. Petrucci.

defined. He adhered almost exclusively to the use of powerful ink-lines and denied himself the use of any color, whether scattered or prominent, which would have robbed his painting of the austerity which was the source of its surpassing feeling. But in order to appreciate the full value of the new ideas introduced by Wu into Chinese painting, it is necessary to understand the exact nature of the technique that was in practice up to the seventh and eighth centuries, at the opening of the T'ang dynasty.

At that time there prevailed the analytic, painstaking, detailed and very considered drawing that is common to all periods preceding great constructive work. This technique admitted the use of two fundamental methods: one called *double contour*, the other *contour* or *single contour*. The method of *double contour* was applied chiefly to the drawing of plant life in landscape. It consisted in outlining leaves or branches by means of two lines of ink placed in apposition. The space thus enclosed was filled with color. Any peculiarities of formation, knots in wood and veins in leaves were added subsequently. The name of *single contour* was applied to drawings wherein a single ink line outlined the object, the space enclosed being then filled with color.

If the application of these analytic methods was sometimes carried to the extreme of delicacy it never became labored. Throughout its entire evolution the art of the T'ang period is characterized by a

sense of the magnificent. Once the study of forms was exhausted, this type of work was bound to be superceded. Wu Tao-tzŭ profited by the work of his predecessors. Combining in a single stroke of the brush, vigor and an eclectic character of line, with values and fluidity of tone, he brought to a supreme unity the two great principles by which things are made manifest in all the magic of their essential structure. But it must be understood that this patient investigation of forms was not limited to preparing the way for a single master. The logical outcome was an independent movement to which the origin of modern Chinese painting can be traced.

"Painting has two branches," the books say, "that of the North and that of the South; the separation occurred in the T'ang period." These terms *Northern School* and *Southern School* must not be taken literally. They serve merely to characterize styles which, in the eighth century, liberated themselves from methods demanding such close study and exact definition of forms. The style of the Northern School is strong, vehement and bold; the style of the Southern School is melancholy and dreamy. The ideal of Northern China, impregnated with barbarian elements, is brought into contrast with that of Southern China, heir to an already ancient civilization, and under the spell of Taoist legends and the bewildered dreams of its philosophers.[1]

[1] These divisions of Northern and Southern Schools do not correspond, as might be imagined, to geographical limitations.

PLATE IX. HORSEMAN FOLLOWED BY TWO ATTENDANTS

Sung Period. Collection of A. Stoclet.

Li Ssu-hsün and his son Li Chao-tao (eighth century) are considered to be the founders of the Northern School. The paintings attributed to them show the character which the Northern style preserved up to the Ming period and which was to be emphasized to the point of brutality at the hands of certain masters in the Yüan period. At the outset, in its brilliancy and precision, the Northern style held to a certain refinement of line; later the line is drawn with a firm and powerful brush and strong colors are applied almost pure.

In direct contrast the Southern style is made up of half-tints, with a feeling of reserve and intentional restraint, which gives it, with equal power, at times a more appealing charm. The lines are pliant, immersed in shading, color is suggested in a subtle fashion and, in contrast to the almost brutal emphasis of the North, it finds expression in chiaroscuro and concealed harmonies.

The foundation of the Southern School is attributed to a great landscape painter of the eighth century, Wang Wei. Nothing could better determine his tendencies than monochrome[1] painting in Chinese ink. Ac-

Painters of the South worked in the style of the North and painters of the North likewise used the Southern style. Moreover the same master was able to employ one or the other according to the inspiration of the moment. These works were produced for a receptive people capable of understanding both styles.

[1] "Monochrome is a starved and lifeless term to express the marvellous range and subtlety of tones of which the preparation

cording to the records, this was first practiced by him. It constitutes what in China, as well as in Japan, is called the *literary man's painting* and is, in reality, quite closely related to calligraphy. The variety of shadings and relative colors of objects depend entirely upon the tones of ink washes. Wang Wei seems to have treated monochrome mainly from the standpoint of chiaroscuro, in his search for an atmospheric perspective which should be both fluid and ethereal. It appears that the accentuation of lines according to rule that is seen later on, where forms are synthetized — sometimes to an excessive degree — was only a derivation of the work of Wang Wei and caused by the intrusion of calligraphic virtuosity into the domain of painting.

When we arrive at Wang Wei, landscape is treated as a special subject and with its own resources. It was he who discovered the principles which govern the fading of colors and forms in the distance, and who formulated the laws of atmospheric perspective. Paintings in his style are all executed in a predominating color which the Chinese call *luo-ts'ing*, a mineral color of varying shades ranging from a malachite green to a lapis-lazuli blue. It will be seen why *luo-ts'ing* gave its name to the style of Wang Wei.

By means of bluish tints he painted the distant

of black soot known as Chinese ink is capable." Laurence Binyon in "The Flight of the Dragon." — TRANSLATOR.

PLATE X. LANDSCAPE IN THE STYLE OF HSIA KUEI

Sung Period. Collection of Martin White.

expanse of landscape. Mountains forming screens in the backgrounds and masses of trees lost in the distance, are all indicated by the azure tints which intervening layers of air give to remote objects. But as the foreground is approached, rightful colors begin to prevail and the azure tints are subtly graded, passing into a fresh and brilliant green amongst wooded declivities, and into the natural hue in the foliage of trees. Often heavy mists, spreading at the foot of high mountains, veil the outlines and still further emphasize the feeling of limitless space.[1]

But when a master has carried his study of the fading of colors and of their relative values thus far, he must have considered not only the element of color itself, but also the collective tones which color is capable of expressing. From this to monochrome painting in Chinese ink is but a step; historical testimony shows that Wang Wei took this step. By the simple opposition of black and white, and through tone values and gradations of shades, he endeavored to create the same feeling of atmosphere and space which he had been able to express with *luo-ts'ing*. No original picture remains to inform us to what extent

[1] I have not seen nor do I know of any paintings which can be said with certainty to be from the hand of Wang Wei. But from the records as well as from works directly inspired by him, an idea of his style and technique can be formed. Ancient paintings in *luo-ts'ing* are found in Japan as well as in China. The British Museum of London has a scroll painted by Chao Mêng-fu, in the manner of Wang Wei, dated 1309.

he succeeded, but by means of monochrome paintings of the Sung period which owe their inspiration to him, the importance of the reform accomplished, and the tendencies manifested in those lost works of art may be divined.

Another master whose work can be defined with sufficient accuracy to cite as an illustration of a different aspect of the history of painting during the T'ang period, is Han Kan, who lived in the middle of the eighth century and who is celebrated as a painter of horses.

The sculptured stones of the Han dynasty, especially the admirable bas-reliefs of the tomb of Chao-ling, representing the favorite coursers of the emperor T'ai-tsung, show the manner in which artists, from the third to the seventh centuries, were capable of studying and delineating the postures of the horse. It is therefore not surprising to find a great animal painter in the eighth century. Beyond question he was not the first. The written records have preserved the names of several of his predecessors and while the honor of having been the great founder of a school was attributed to him, it is possible that this refers only to an artistic movement bearing his name, of which he was not the sole representative.

But the work of Han Kan and the unknown artists grouped around him, proclaims a powerful tradition, a well grounded school of animal painters which had attained the highest eminence. It was

destined to exert a strong influence upon painters of horses in the Yüan epoch and even when, later on, this great tradition is seen disappearing, cloying and insipid, amidst the mannerisms of the Ming period, it will still retain sufficient power to carry thus far a reflection of the vigor and vitality attained in the great periods.

The painting of *Flowers and Birds*, and *Plants and Insects* appears to have been already established at this time. The flowers and plants are drawn according to the methods of *double contour* and *single contour*, worked over and brought out with that intensity of analysis to which allusion has been made. The bird is caught in its most subtle movement, the insect studied in its essential structure.

Thus we see that Chinese painting had extended its investigations in every direction and had solved the problems found along its path. It had absorbed foreign influences, altered its conception of the divine and found a new type of figure. It had endowed landscape painting with all the resources of atmospheric perspective and had established the two essential styles of the North and the South. The painter was master of the visible; his thought dominated form and was able to express itself with freedom.

V. THE SUNG PERIOD—TENTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

THE T'ang period had been the golden age of Chinese poetry. It had witnessed an extraordinary outburst of religious fervor, and the overwhelming domination of Buddhism. It had, moreover, triumphantly re-established the unity of the empire and to the pride of intellectual activity it could add the pride of might and dominion. But the same cannot be said for the Sung period. From a political standpoint its history is one of cumulative disaster. Ancient China retreated by degrees before the thrusts of the barbarians, until the great thunderbolt of Genghis Khan's conquest, reverberating with formidable echoes throughout all Asia, announced the approaching downfall of culture in the red dawn of a new era.

The Sung culture, totally different from that of the T'ang period, was, however, swept forward to its culmination. It would seem as if, under the menace of the barbarians, the mind had set for its goal the development of ideas embryonic in earlier work, formulating them in haste and arresting them finally in perfect yet sad images, in which the heights attained were haunted by the shadow of impending ruin.

PLATE XI. LANDSCAPE BY MA LIN

Sung Period. Collection of R. Petrucci.

The dynasty opened with a classical reaction against new ideas and witnessed a return to Confucian philosophy, with its conception of the State. But centuries of history had not rolled by without effect. In the tenth and eleventh centuries the ancient writings were no longer understood with their original meaning. A whole series of philosophers, of whom the last is Chu Hsi (thirteenth century), had formulated a composite doctrine resulting in what might be called an official philosophy, which has dominated to the present day. Some bold spirits, however, opposed this reactionary codification, struggling in vain to give a positive and firm structure to the doomed empire. Their influence appears to have been considerable. Just as the old heterodox philosophy was being stifled by the dry and colorless metaphysics of the conservatives, it was awakened to new life by the painters, who gave it a stirring interpretation in their work.

The period of technical research was past. At first, with care and patience, forms had been determined by drawing. Color had remained a thing apart, regarded as a work of illumination and quite distinct from drawing. Then study was extended still further. Color came to be viewed in the light of shades and tones and became one of the means for the expression of form; it became the very drawing itself, — that which reveals the basic structure.

Wang Wei represents the moment when art, emancipating itself from problems already solved, had

conquered every medium of expression. Such is the tradition which he bequeathed to the Sung artists, who were destined to add thereto such supreme masterpieces.

The Sung painters were haunted by the old philosophical beliefs as to the formation of the universe. Beyond the actual surroundings they dimly perceived a magic world made up of perfect forms. Appearances were but the visible covering of the two great principles whose combination engendered life. They believed that, in painting, they did more than to reproduce the external form of things. They labored with the conviction that they were wresting the soul from objects, in order to transfer it to the painted silk. Thus they created something new, an imaginary world more beautiful than the real world, wherein the intimate relation of beings and things was disclosed, — a world pervaded by pure spirit and one which was revealed only to those whose thought was sufficiently enlightened, and whose sympathies were sufficiently broad, to understand and to be stirred.

The painters of the line of Wang Wei during the Sung period, devoted themselves chiefly to the development of painting in monochrome. They pursued the study of relations of tones and values of shading up to the limit of extreme delicacy, and if they mingled color at all with their subtle evocations, it was with a feeling of unequalled restraint. They dwelt for the most part in intimacy with Nature. Flee-

PLATE XII. MONGOL HORSEMAN RETURNING FROM THE HUNT

By Chao Mêng-fu. Yüan Period. Doucet Collection.

ing from the cares of court and city, they retired into mountain solitudes, meditating for long periods before taking up the brush to paint. Thus they portrayed those mountains enveloped in mists, wherein was revealed the harmony of the two principles which control the universe. From the depths of valleys misty vapors arose and cedars and gigantic pines reared their majestic forms, while, on the threshold of a thatched cabin upon some rocky plateau, a hermit deep in meditation contemplated the vast expanse of a landscape of august grandeur.

Sometimes, turning to plant forms, they painted the bamboo in black and white. A single masterly stroke sufficed to draw the cylindrical stalk from one joint to another, or the pointed leaves which are so quivering with life that we seem to hear the plaintive voice of the wind "combed," as the Chinese writings express it, "by the reeds." Or again, when a flower was the subject, they suggested it with a simplicity that presupposes a scientifically exact study of forms. It was by no means the splendid image which they sought to grasp but the soul itself; at one time the flower barely open in all its enchanting freshness, at another the softened petals drooping in languid fashion, revealing a splendor still present but soon to fade; at times the dew moistening the leaves, the snow shrouding them with its purity, or the slow monotonous rain beneath which they drip, motionless. These paintings are always instinct with deep poetic feeling.

At the hands of the Sung painters the school of landscape and monochrome technique attained a level which will never be exceeded. The masters of this period are numerous and are frequently represented by works of almost certain authenticity. It seems useless to assemble here names which will convey no meaning to the European reader. It will suffice to illustrate by a few great figures the three centuries of history during which Chinese landscape painting reached its culminating point.

Tung Yüan and Chü Jan are considered by the critics as having founded a special school in the great tradition of Wang Wei. Their paintings were quiet in coloring and were executed with broad strokes in an impressionist style. These works must be viewed from a distance to see their apparent violence merge into extreme elegance. They furnish a complete demonstration of the laws of atmospheric perspective, with its feeling of distance and infinite space, in which forms are immersed. Here we find evidence that these painters were the first to attempt the arrangement of lines according to rule, which led ultimately to calligraphic painting.

Among the heads of schools cited in the Chinese writings Ma Yüan and Hsia Kuei of the Sung dynasty must be placed in a class by themselves. Both of these masters lived at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries. Their style can be described with accuracy since original examples

are extant — both by themselves and by their disciples — in which their characteristics are fully revealed.

Ma Yüan is classed with the Southern School by reason of his restraint in the use of color, his greatness of conception and his technical treatment of forms. But he brings to his work a virility in which the influence of the Northern School is plainly discerned. He has a broad stroke and a masterful manner which place his works in the front rank of all Chinese painting. His mountainous backgrounds rear themselves with fierce energy. His old pines, with branches wreathed in vines, would suffice alone to define his style, so freely do they express the force of plant life and the proud defiance of the aged tree. He loved the mountain solitudes to which he gave a new imagery, so authoritative and so perfect that it served to create a school.

The influence of Ma Yüan was felt by his brother and by his son, Ma Lin. Although the death of the latter occurred under the Mongolian dynasty, he was an exponent of Sung art. The fierce energy of the old master gives way to a somewhat more melancholy and gentle quality in his son. There is the same restraint in the handling of the brush, the same reserve in the use of color, but the landscape stretches out into deep and dreamy vistas that are indescribably poetic. The melancholy of autumn, the sadness of flights of birds that circle in the evening light, the

feeling of seclusion and silence, such are the things in which this poetic spirit finds its joy, true heir of the master mind whose genius found expression in the wild aspects of nature.

The school of Ma dominated the entire subsequent period and his influence extended as far as Korea, where traces of it were still to be found as late as the fifteenth century. As the history of Korean painting becomes better known, we shall be able to say with more accuracy what it owes to other Chinese masters; but in so far as those mentioned are concerned, their influence appears to have been sufficiently strong to impress a certain type on fragmentary works from Korea which have become known to us recently.

We are far from being as well informed regarding Hsia Kuei, but we have that which is worth more than written records, a few paintings preserved in Japanese collections, which it seems legitimate to attribute to him without reservation. It is readily seen why his name is always linked with that of Ma Yüan. His work shows the same energy and power and discloses an ideal which is similar to that of his confrère. He seems to have penetrated even further than Ma Yüan along the path of daring simplifications, and to have approached at times the calligraphic style. He painted both landscape and figures and was skilled in obtaining strange effects, as if of color, through his use of monochrome.

Another painter whose name dominates the history

of this time and whose work serves to characterize a special aspect is Li Lung-mien. It is naturally difficult to prove that all the works attributed to him are authentic. However, collections in Japanese temples or privately owned, possess paintings which passed as his at a very early date and in which at least we can recognize his style. In reviewing the centuries of history, it is interesting to note that the work of Li Lung-mien is not without similarity, in certain of its elements, to the paintings of Ku K'ai-chih. His line is delicate and flexible and he draws his outlines with the same subtlety, the same grace and the same instinct for harmonious curves and an extraordinary rhythm.

The tradition which arose in a period antedating the T'ang epoch was therefore still unbroken in the Sung period, and I am sure that proofs of this will increase in number as our information becomes more accurate. New evidence furnished by the paintings found at Tun-huang and certain frescoes at Murtuq has recently shown that the type of Buddhist hermit — the Lohan meditating in solitude — whose inception had, until these discoveries, been attributed to Li Lung-mien, in reality dated much further back and originated in the Buddhist art of Eastern Turkestan, perhaps even in India. From those regions are derived the magnificent subjects of which Li Lung-mien made use to express meditation. Sometimes there are emaciated faces, withered bodies with protruding tendons that outline deep hollows, and again rotund and peaceful

figures meditating in tranquil seclusion. From the written records as well as in his works, there is every evidence that he was one of those who revived Buddhist painting. No matter what models he chose to follow, he always gave them a stress and a peculiar distinction, while from the standpoint of pure art he had the ability to portray them with finished elegance and majestic dignity.

Li Lung-mien was not content to paint Buddhist figures only. He painted landscape also, and in his youth he had painted horses. A great critic of the Sung period said of him that "his soul entered into communion with all things, his spirit penetrated the mysteries and the secrets of nature." This critic added that one day he saw Li Lung-mien painting a Buddhist divinity. The words of the god fairly leapt from the lines; it seemed as if the brush of the master summoned them one by one into being. Like all the masters of his time, Li Lung-mien sought to free the spirit from its outward semblance. Beyond the material, he perceived the immaterial force which animates the world. As a landscape painter his conception of Nature was broad and majestic. His graceful and harmonious line recalls the happiest moments in the history of plastic art, and he challenges comparison with a facile genius like Raphael. But he includes the whole realm of nature in his subjects, and in his work we find traces, expressed with greater breadth, but with quite as keen an insight, of an ancient and

PLATE XIII. PIGEONS BY CH'IEN HSÜAN

Yüan Period. Collection of R. Petrucci.

noble art, such as was found almost extinct in the work of Ku K'ai-chih.

We cannot leave the Sung painters without devoting some attention to Mi Fei and his son. The two Mi's, indeed, accomplished a far-reaching reform in Chinese technique; they enriched painting with a new imagery and founded a school which, like that of Ma, exerted an influence on later periods and was strongly felt in Korea.

In addition to being a great painter, Mi Fei was a great calligraphist. This is apparent however little one may have seen of work in his style. He possesses in the highest degree what the Chinese describe as the "handling of flowing ink." He used the technique of monochrome almost exclusively, and so closely related tone values to the line, or rather to the brush-stroke, that it is difficult to decide whether he paints rather than draws, or draws rather than paints. Properly speaking, he does not employ the line at all but works by masses, by broad, heavily inked touches, without pausing to emphasize the deep warm blacks provided by Chinese ink. His manner recalls certain drawings by Rembrandt, also produced by strong inking, which evoke a strange and magical effect of light. Such was the spirit in which Mi Fei treated landscape. This technique marks his style and gives it an individuality that is indisputable. The vehemence with which he attacks forms, the rapidity of his brush-stroke, the way in which things spring from

such energy, call to mind pictures by European masters, painted in full color, and it may be said of the paintings of Mi Fei that they are fairly *colored* by their tremendous vitality, if the quality of the materials he employed permits the use of such a term. Therefore Mi Fei and his son are responsible for a new technique, a strongly individual work, and the creation of a style which marks the highest achievement in monochrome. The trend which impelled them was, however, general. Carried to its extreme it led to the style of painting called calligraphic, of which there has been occasion to speak several times.

Calligraphic painting, or the *literary style*, has its origin in the studies of Wang Wei when, renouncing the aid of colour, he strove by harmony of shading and by tone values, to reproduce the vast reaches of space and all the shifting subtlety of atmospheric perspective. The exclusive use of Chinese ink necessitated special studies since thus calligraphy was directly approached. The different styles of writing are almost drawing in themselves. Each style of writing has its own rules for dissecting the written character and making the stroke. Now, as is known, the Chinese painters attached supreme importance to the line and to the brush-stroke. This was due in part to their equipment and in part to the fact that the amateurs of art were prepared by their classical studies to appreciate the strength or the delicacy of a line judged for itself, quite independently of the forms represented.

We must also bear in mind that all of the Chinese painters were scholars, belonging to the class of the literati.[1] Writers, poets, statesmen, soldiers, Buddhist or Taoist priests, and philosophers have all furnished the greatest names in art. Under such conditions the technical relationship between the line of the painter and that of the calligraphist was closer, since painter and calligraphist were frequently united in one and the same person. Thence came the early tendency to use monochrome and to represent forms in the abstract, rendering them more and more as mere themes, thus reducing the subject to a few simple calligraphic strokes.

It is difficult for a European to follow the thought of the Chinese painters in these daring simplifications. Sometimes they are carried to such an extreme as to leave us with a feeling of perplexity. Often however they give rise to mighty conceptions and

[1] The literati, or lettered class, were the aristocracy in what was the most democratic of absolute monarchies. No matter how humble his origin, anyone of the male sex was eligible to compete in the examinations which were based upon literary knowledge and memory of the classics. Proficiency in handwriting was a natural result. The successful candidate might aspire to any post in the empire, as official positions were bestowed through literary merit. During three days and two nights at the time of examination the candidate was not allowed to leave his tiny box-like cell, lacking even space to lie down. Cases of death during the examinations were not infrequent. The examination halls in Peking are now destroyed and those in Nanking with 20,000 cells are crumbling away. — TRANSLATOR.

paintings whose essential character impresses us as a unique product of genius. Calligraphic painting reached its highest level during the Sung and Yüan periods. It was so closely allied to painting that the Emperor Hui Tsung, who ascended the throne in 1100, founded the Imperial Academy of Calligraphy and Painting in the first year of his reign. Hui Tsung was himself a painter. The books credit him with especial mastery in the representation of birds of prey, eagles, falcons and hawks, which seems to be sufficient reason for deliberately attributing to him every painting of a bird of prey, even when there is evidence that it was painted two or three centuries later than his time. Perhaps before long we shall find authentic paintings by Hui Tsung. A painting belonging to the Musée Guimet, which comes from the collection of Tuan Fang, is the one which by its annotations bears the greatest guaranty of authenticity, but it is a representation of a figure painting of the T'ang dynasty and gives us no information as to the manner in which Hui Tsung painted eagles. However, certain paintings from his collections have come down to us. Whether or not by the imperial hand they proclaim a virile art, an instinct for the grandiose and a majestic character which are the qualities of which the eagle is a symbol.

The foundation of the Academy of Calligraphy and Painting had results quite other than those hoped for by its founder. It became imbued with the evils of

formalism. It was established in the imperial capital in court surroundings, in other words, in an atmosphere from which true artists depart with all possible speed. It suffered inevitably through the influences of a taste, refined it is true, but which already inclined toward mannerisms and preciosity. Conventions were established, subjects became stereotyped, the taste for brilliant colors developed and, even before the end of the Sung period, there was a marked division between academic and national art. Pedantry and affectation began to take the place of boldness and strength.

Doubtless this tendency would have developed still further but for a series of disasters and the menace of a new dynasty looming on the horizon of Central Asia, which was already resounding with the clash of Mongol arms.

VI. THE YÜAN PERIOD — THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

FROM the standpoint of civilization the Mongolian dynasty of Yüan brought nothing to China. On the contrary, the foreign elements were absorbed by the ancient culture for, in the final summing-up, the mind will always be stronger than weapons. From the standpoint of painting, however, this period has marked individuality.

The Sung period had been distinctly dominated by the ideals of Southern China. Philosophical inspiration had proven too strong to permit the style of the Northern School to assert absolute sway. In this we must make an exception of Buddhist painting, which, — save in the work of a few chance painters of religious subjects — continues the traditions of the T'ang period, preserving the original character of its coloring. It is true that there were masterpieces to the credit of the Northern School but it had by no means kept to the style of vivid illumination which marked its inception.[1] It had yielded to the influence

[1] It should be borne in mind that the author uses the term illumination in the sense of color applied within a distinct and limiting outline. This is illustrated in the definitions of single and double contour. — TRANSLATOR.

PLATE XIV. BAMBOOS IN MONOCHROME BY WU CHÊN

Yüan Period. Musée Guimet.

of the Southern style, was simplified by this contact and took on the austerity and proportion of the South. It would seem as if the painters hastened to add their testimony before the philosophy of the ancient sages should disappear. They strove to give the world perfect images in which the great principles of the universe could be felt vibrating. The only suitable medium for such expression was the technique of the Southern School which they followed with more or less fidelity.

Southern China was at that time the scene of awakened faculties. Shaken to its foundations by the mystic movement — both Taoist and Buddhist — of the T'ang period, the Confucian doctrine had lost ground but had not yet congealed into the rigid official code of a Chu Hsi. While heterodox beliefs still prevailed, all were free to borrow their prophetic and poetic meaning.

When the Mongols came into power, they only carried to completion the work of conservation begun by the Sung emperors. In their contact with China they resembled timid pupils quite as much as conquerors. Once emperor of China, the Mongol Kublai Khan could not but remember his purely Chinese education. Moreover it was quite the Tartar custom to extend their conquests to administrative organization, by establishing a hierarchy of functionaries. The conception of a supreme and autocratic State, paternal in its absolutism, interven-

ing even to the details of private life in order to assure the happiness of the people, — this idea, dear to the literary conservators of the Confucian School during the Sung period, was also too similar to the Tartar ideal to be denied immediate adoption. Heterodox doctrines were formally banished from schools. Rejected with scorn as being corrupt and dangerous, there remained of these doctrines only such residuum as might be found in the independent thought of artists, who were more difficult to control. The magnificent movement of the Sung period began to abate; it produced its last master pieces and gradually waned, until under Ming rule it was to die out completely.

The Yüan epoch, therefore, appears in the light of a transition period connecting the fifteenth century of Ming with the thirteenth century of Sung. From the point of view which interests us, it did nothing but complete a work which had been carried on with energy and success by adherents in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It strove to reduce China to a severely regulated State in which all great movements and impulses should be under strict control. It succeeded. It succeeded so well, indeed, that the Europeans who came to know China in the seventeenth century and who rediscovered it so unnecessarily in the nineteenth century, believed it to have been motionless for two thousand years. There is no need to lay stress here upon the absurdity of this prevalent opinion. It has been seen in the past and will be seen in modern

PLATE XV. PAINTINGS OF THE YÜAN OR EARLY MING PERIOD

Style of the Northern School. Collection of R. Petrucci.

times, that the inner travail, the evolution and the diversity are by no means arrested. Like the nations of Europe, China has had its evolution; the causes were analagous, its destiny the same. This is especially felt in the history of its painting. When the potent inspiration of the Southern School began to wane, the style of the North took the upper hand for obvious reasons.

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Partially civilized barbarians occupied the highest places in the State. They were the controlling party at the imperial court and had usurped the place of the old society, refined, subtle and perhaps too studied, which formed the environment of the last Sung emperors. Despite their naïve efforts and good will, these barbarians could not fathom an art so austere, enlightened and balanced. They were utterly ignorant of such a masterly conception of nature as was evoked in Chinese painting. Monochrome to them was dull. They could admire on trust, but they could not understand. On the other hand, the Northern style with its bold assurance, strong coloring and drawing positive almost to the point of seeming sculptural, was more akin to their mental outlook. There at least they found something which recalled those rugs on which they appear to have exhausted their artistic resources. In a word, they were more accustomed to the Northern style and had brought with them from the Northern regions their own artists, both Chinese and barbarian.

The Northern temperament, reflective, strong and positive, now began to assume mastery over the bewildered reveries of the Southern nature. Things are seen to change. Even the masters who continue the Sung tradition infuse a somewhat more robust quality into their works, but, in so doing, they lose a certain stirring depth which gave the work of their predecessors such an exceptional character. Caught between these two tendencies, Yüan painting takes on new traits, which are perhaps more accessible to European mentality because they are more simple and direct. These observations apply to the general evolution of Chinese painting from the end of the thirteenth to the end of the fourteenth centuries. We must now consider it more in detail, citing by way of illustration a few of the painters who expressed the spirit of the time.

At its inception the Yüan dynasty had inherited the last masters of the Sung period, among them two artists who are recognized as of the first rank. Chao Mêng-fu — known also under the appellation of Tzŭ-ang — was born in 1254. He was a descendant of the first Sung emperor and held an hereditary post which he resigned at the time the Yüan dynasty came into power. He retired into private life until 1286, then when called back to court as a high functionary, he became a supporter of the new dynasty. Chao Mêng-fu painted landscape as well as figures, flowers and the bamboo, but he is most celebrated for his

PLATE XVI. PORTRAIT OF A PRIEST

Yüan or Early Ming Period. Collection of H. Rivière.

horses. Numberless paintings of horses are attributed to this master; needless to say the great majority of these are not by his hand.

As a landscape painter he seems to have worked in the style of the Southern School, with a fine, simple line in which may still be seen traces of the ancient tradition that extends back to Ku K'ai-chih. This characteristic line is found in the paintings of men and horses where the hand of Chao Mêng-fu is distinguishable. He bequeaths it to the large school which he founded, and, through his pupils, it becomes the inheritance of his imitators in the Ming period. It is more than probable that almost all of the paintings by his pupils, bearing the signature Tzŭ-ang, are attributed to the master, while his own paintings are ascribed to Han Kan, painter of horses in the T'ang period. However, among the numerous works attributed to Chao Mêng-fu, there are a few in which we recognize the vibrant and flexible line which is seen in his landscapes. These paintings bear the signature of Tzŭ-ang, in all probability a false one, but the work of art itself will always be of greater value in determining its authenticity than the most impressive of inscriptions. If the technique and the quality of the line are sufficiently similar to warrant attributing to the same hand the landscape in the British Museum, and any particular painting of horses, this may be regarded as sufficient evidence on which to base our own opinion as to his style.

Amongst his grooms and mounted soldiers, Chao Mêng-fu painted the different races which the wave of Mongolian invasion had swept into China: Chinese from the central provinces, Tartars, Mongols with fur caps, Moslems of a Semitic type from Turkestan, with white turbans and heavy earrings. Whether his subject was the little Tartar horse from the Mongolian plains or the beautiful steeds of ancient Transoxiana, always brought as tribute by way of Khotan to the Chinese court, he gave the life of the horse a singular beauty, portraying him in an equally happy manner whether in the act of racing or in the attitudes of repose. In his mind still dwelt the vision of Sung ideals, which proclaimed the hidden soul of things and valued spirituality and life in a painting. Although we see marked evidence of the Southern style in his work, his paintings are more strongly colored than are those of that school. The influence of the Yüan period begins to make itself felt. It brings out values in colored pigment, emphasizes its violence and paves the way for a new tradition.

Chao Mêng-fu has been compared by Chinese critics to his great predecessor Han Kan. The writings, however, are unanimous in stating that, notwithstanding his undeniable mastery, he lacked something of the vigor of the earlier master. When we attempt to compare the two styles through the aid of paintings of the T'ang period, wherein a reflection of the great animal painter may be sought, the writings appear

PLATE XVII. HORSE

Painting by an unknown artist. Yüan or Early Ming Period.
Doucet Collection.

to be confirmed in attributing a more positive and forceful character to the work of Han Kan or the unknown group of painters around him. But Chao Mêng-fu seems to have possessed in a higher degree the feeling of movement and life, and to have been less hampered in his choice of poses. Centuries of study and of observation had intervened between the great animal painter of the T'ang epoch and his worthy rival of a later period.

Like Chao Mêng-fu, Ch'ien Hsüan, or Ch'ien Shun-chü, retired from public life at the downfall of the Sung dynasty. He was a member of a group of the faithful over which Chao presided, but, more decided than the latter in his opposition to the new dynasty, he was indignant at his confrère's defection and refused to follow his example. He lived in retirement, devoting himself to painting and to poetry up to the time of his death. He also continued the Sung tradition under the Yüan dynasty to which, as a matter of fact, he belonged only during the second part of his life. He painted figures, landscape, flowers and birds. His delicate line is not lacking in strength, and he seems to have been especially endowed with a sense of form which approached greatness in its simplicity. Whether the subject is a young prince or a pigeon perched on the summit of a rock from which chrysanthemums are springing, the same dignified and tranquil nobility is asserted with ease. He still used the quiet and restrained coloring of the Sung

period and prolonged, without impairing it, the great tradition that a century and a half could not quite efface.

Of Yen Hui we know almost nothing; the books state briefly that he painted Buddhist figures, birds and flowers, and that he was past master in the painting of demons. Nothing is known of the date of his birth or if, by his age and training, he could be classed in the Sung period, but several admirable paintings by him are extant which serve to show how Sung art was still interpreted by exceptional masters in the Yüan period. His line is strong, broader, fuller and more abrupt than that of Chao Mêng-fu or Ch'ien Shun-chü. The quivering vitality that emanates from his pictures is thrilling. Whether the subject is a peony heavy with dew, whose drooping petals presage the approaching end, or a Buddhist monk patching his mantle, the fleeting moment is seized with such intuitive power that prolonged contemplation of the painting creates the impression that it is suddenly about to come to life. There is something sturdier, more startling, less dreamy in these great painters who continue the traditions of Sung art; their work alone demonstrated that tradition could be revived and that ancient China, under the Mongolian dynasty, was still preserving its creative spirit and advancing resolutely into fertile fields.

In Huang Kung-wang and Ni Tsan, we approach a different order of things. Lines began to take on

PLATE XVIII. VISIT TO THE EMPEROR BY THE IMMORTALS FROM ON HIGH

Ming Period. British Museum, London.

a classical character, to be divided into a series of different types, which painters adopted according to their temperament and requirements, and finally became impersonal and academic. Both of these painters, nevertheless, were under the spell of early influences extending back to the T'ang artists. Through study of these old masters they returned to the use of a full and sometimes vivid color, but kept a profound love of nature, and a fresh and original vision, by which they still perpetuated the inspiration of Sung painting in a new form. With these painters, however, new features appeared. Reds and purples became dominant notes amidst rich greens which set them off and enhanced their brilliancy. The vision of landscape itself is somewhat more realistic and less subtle. In all of these essentials Ni Tsan, who died in 1374, brings us nearer to the Ming period.

Simultaneously, though quite apart, marked tendencies of a different character were evident. The old masters of the T'ang period had again returned to favor. The vivid illumination and color distinct from drawing, in these firm and vigorous works appealed to the untutored barbarian. On the other hand, the studies of the Sung period had not been fruitless; therefore when, under these influences, the use of color was resumed, the painters profited by what the practice of monochrome had taught meanwhile. In the Yüan period appear those paintings which are attacked directly with a dripping brush without pre-

liminary drawing, the forms being modeled in the color itself. The Chinese called this painting "without bones," in other words, deprived of the assistance of line. This procedure was first used by a painter of the Sung period, but it did not take root definitely until the time when the practice of using Chinese ink as a medium to express tones had taught painters how to model forms in color itself, making the structure depend upon color.

Seen as a whole, the Yüan period witnessed the assembling, the concentration, so to speak, of the ardent but scattered inspirations of the great masters of the preceding school. It produced splendid compositions in which the golden age of Chinese painting continued to be manifest. Masters arose and if, in spite of all, they mark a reaction toward the Northern style, seeking rich and vivid color, they give us a vision of beauty that is equal to the work of their predecessors.

Meanwhile grave signs of decadence were apparent. Composition became overladen and complex and began to lose something of the noble simplicity, greatness and supreme charm of the old masters. It was evident that the Yüan painters were working under the eye of the barbarians. They yielded to the taste of the latter for anecdote, for surmounting difficulties and for sentimental detail. Thus far there were only scarcely perceptible shadows and momentary weaknesses, warning signs of decadence; but when such

signs are evident, decadence is at hand, and that which the virility of the barbarians had preserved was to be lost through the creed-bound dignity of an academic China, which was imprisoned in a rigid system of rules.

VII. THE MING PERIOD — FOURTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

THE Ming dynasty came into power on the wings of national feeling. China rallied her forces and expelled the foreign tyrants. Without doubt the nation cherished the illusion of rebuilding itself upon the model of the past, and the first emperors of the dynasty believed that the empire could be re-established upon an unshakable foundation. But the Ming dynasty, in reality, was but the heir and follower of Yüan. The latter itself had been only a connecting link. It had changed nothing, but had tended rather to absorb into the Chinese system the Northern barbarians, who up to that time had been foreigners. It had unwittingly achieved unity for China, despite itself and against its own inclination. In the administration of the empire, it had finished the program of conservation which the Sung dynasty, through impotence, had been unable to carry to completion.

The Ming dynasty inherited the work of the Mongols and consolidated it. It survived under their reign and under that of the Ch'ing rulers until the final disintegration, of which we have but recently

PLATE XIX. EGRETS BY LIN LIANG

Ming Period. Collection of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Junior.

seen the results. The peaceful ideals of the Ming dynasty, the marked predominance of Confucianism as a code of ethics, with certain modifications by Chu Hsi, combined to form an ensemble that was apparently perfect and which made it possible to have faith in the excellence of the principles laid down by the monarchy. Thus a school was formed which had its own philosophy, manners and ideals, all of them cold, stiff and without spontaneity. It was an over-perfect machine which went like clockwork. The world was judged with a narrow and somewhat stupid self-confidence. The ideal dwelt in the word of Confucian writings, divorced from their true meaning, and so badly interpreted that they ceased to be understood aright. The meticulous, bureaucratic and hieratic administration of the Tartars was a perfect system of government. The machine was still new and worked well, whence arose a false impression of permanence which added still further to the complacency of the conservative mind. An art was necessary to this China. She had it. It was academic painting.

Side by side with this and yet apart, other influences were at work. Notwithstanding the prohibition of books on heterodox philosophies in schools, accompanied by the widespread decadence of Buddhism, and the complete downfall of Taoism owing to gross practices in popular magic, and despite the disdain of the official world, another element in China was preserv-

ing the spirit of the past, the restless spirit that craved novelty. In all probability its obscure workings did not appear immediately upon the surface, concealed as they were by the strictly prescribed screen of official China. They were sufficiently strong, however, to give rise to an art which differed essentially from academic art, and which numbered masters who were comparable with those of the past. In spite of adverse circumstances and the weight under which these movements were buried, they made themselves felt in violent upheavals. First let us draw a picture of the decadence of an art and later we shall return to activity and life.

Official painting in the Ming period rapidly stiffened into convention. To understand how it took shape, we must go back to the time of Hui Tsung and observe the method of recruiting talent in the Academy which he founded.

That painting was allied to philosophic and poetic thought is already known. It was always a refined diversion of poets and painters to unite in a quest for the beautiful. The poet wrote verses and the painter painted a picture suggesting, sometimes remotely, the thought enshrined in the poem. Such were the conditions upon which Hui Tsung instituted examinations, following which the doors of the Academy were open to the victor. He gave, for example, as subject for a competition a verse saying, "The bamboos envelop the inn beyond the bridge," which

PLATE XX. FLOWERS AND INSECTS

Ming Period. Collection of R. Petrucci.

suggested a landscape with flowing water, a rustic bridge thrown across the stream, a cluster of bamboos on the bank, a "winehouse" half hidden in the verdure. All the competitors, the records say, set to work drawing with minute care the inn which they made the essential feature of the picture. Only one implied its presence by showing, above a dense cluster of bamboos, the little banner which in China denotes the presence of a "winehouse." Two verses of another poem in which allusion was made to the red flowers of spring were interpreted by the representation of a beautiful young girl dressed in red, leaning on a balustrade, for according to Chinese ideas, the thoughts of young men in spring turn there, as elsewhere, toward thoughts of love.

We have here an example of the subtle allusions, at times profoundly poetic, with which Chinese painting abounds. But these things retain their value and charm only in so far as they depend on a free play of mind or upon personal, living sentiments. As accepted conventions regulated in an academic competition, repeated with sustained effort and without enthusiasm, their rigid monotony becomes intolerable. Such was the ultimate fate of that ability to express by half meanings, to suggest without directly stating, to which the Sung painters attached so great an importance. The day it was understood that a little banner fluttering over bamboos indicated the presence of a "winehouse" in a sylvan retreat, or that

a young girl dressed in red symbolized the crimson blooming of a garden pink in springtime, banners and young girls dressed in red were seen in paintings innumerable to the point of satiety.

Thus were established those dry conventions of a somewhat stupid erudition which were so much the fashion in the academic painting of the Ming and the Ch'ing periods, and whose great success repressed the artistic aspirations of a people. Under these influences was rapidly assembled a complete arsenal of allegories, allusions and symbols that gave birth to an art which was possibly very learned, but which was inartistic to the last degree. An academician of the Ming period would have thought himself disgraced if he had not proven by complicated compositions the extent of his knowledge of things of this character. Art was no longer anything but a kind of puzzle. Furthermore, the decadence of eye and hand followed that of the mind, and there next appeared a taste for brilliant colors, overladen compositions, and fine and meticulous lines, culminating in an unbearable nicety. The work of the Academy is summed up in these words.

Let us turn aside from an art that is inert. It robbed things of the creative spirit that animated them. We shall now see what was achieved by those who followed in the steps of the old masters.

The fifteenth century in China witnessed a continuance of the style prevalent during the Sung and Yüan periods. Chou Chih-mien, for example, was true

to that profound feeling for form, that delicacy of coloring, and rhythm in composition which were the endowment of the greatest masters. Shên Chou belonged entirely to the Yüan school, and to prove that the old ideals were not dead, we have in the fifteenth century the magnificent group of painters of the plum tree, with Lu Fu and Wang Yuan-chang at their head.

As before stated, a special philosophy was associated with this tree and its flowers. The white petals scattered on vigorous branches had long typified an inner soul, whose purity was the very likeness of virtue and of tenderness. Chung Jen, who in the eleventh century wrote a treatise on the painting of the plum tree, explains in his chapter on "the derivation of forms" that it is a symbol, a concentrated form, a likeness of the universe. The great fundamental principles mingle harmoniously within it; they express themselves in its shape and reveal themselves through its beauty. Similar to this was the philosophy associated with the bamboo, which endured up to the fifteenth century. The subtle monochromes of Lu Fu show branches of flowering plum swaying in the breeze. In the great works of Wang Yuan-chang trunks of old trees, still bearing hardy blossoms, stand proudly in the magical radiance of the moon. Vibration and power, grandeur and majesty, such are the qualities which were still sought amidst the severe conditions imposed by the use of black and white. Here we feel

that the creative force is not yet spent. We find it equally fresh and vigorous in the ink bamboos of Wên Chêng-ming in the sixteenth century.

In landscape, however, new elements appear which mark a decline. I have already laid stress on the overladen composition which developed in the Yüan epoch. This was still more noticeable in the Ming period. When pictorial art has had a long series of masters, a certain eclecticism is infallibly produced. This leads to the rejection of the direct study of nature, in favor of viewing it only through the eyes of the old masters. This phenomenon appeared in China as well as in Europe. The landscape painters of the Ming period studied the technique of the T'ang and the Sung epochs and codified their system of lines, arranging them in series according to types and schools; in short, they drew from these a ready-made technique by which they were controlled. Turning from nature they yielded to imagination. They delighted in painting fanciful landscapes and were inclined toward images that were more external and less inspired than in the past. Their works, however, were invested with great charm, and the impossible disposition of their clustering peaks and oddly cleft rocks cannot but appeal to the imagination.

In these overladen compositions the unity of the picture is lost. We are no longer in the presence of a simple and forceful idea, but behold a thousand in-

PLATE XXI. LANDSCAPE

Ming Period. Bouasse-Lebel Collection.

cidents, a thousand little details, exquisite in themselves, but which require a search. It is a new conception of landscape. We may possibly prefer the gripping formula of Sung and Yüan art, but we are forced to acknowledge that this later work has great charm and extreme refinement.

To this general trend was added a new taste in color, which became brilliant and complex like the composition itself, harmonious and graceful in the paintings of the masters and always charming in the work of painters of the second rank; but this was the herald of a blatant and vulgar manner which gradually gained ground until it came to be generally adopted by the artisans of the Ch'ing period.

While landscape under the Ming painters was assuming a different guise, and, forgetful of the observances of the past, was beguiling the mind by its charm and delicacy, a new type of figure was also developing. Here we must pause for a moment.

We have seen that figures were treated before landscape by the painters of periods preceding the T'ang dynasty. This early tradition had submitted to the influence of Buddhist art and, while certain of its elements were revived in the work of a few masters, there is no doubt that figure painting from the seventh and eighth centuries on, was absolutely revolutionized. The inevitable result was a new type in the sixteenth century. Painters studied the line for itself, determined its proportions, and analyzed features

and drapery. As far as our present knowledge extends, their observations were not collected and codified until the end of the nineteenth century, but the assembled writings testify that the result of their studies was expressed along the lines indicated from the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Their ideal was totally different from that of the old masters. The figure treated for itself with but few accessories became the sole aim of the painter. He endeavored to show the charm of a woman's face, the dainty and elegant gestures, the supple and voluptuous gait, and he grasped the characteristics and peculiarities of a man's figure by means of an intensified drawing. At times, the influence of analysis was so objective that it resulted in a painting closely approaching European standards. The taste expressed in landscape was likewise evident in figures. There were brilliant and harmonious colors, a charm which became exquisite in the coquettish and vivacious faces of women with ivory skin and brilliant eyes, of graceful movements, and with long, slender, delicate hands, incarnations of the fairies of ancient legend or historic beauties whose memory still lived.

In a word, the philosophical inspiration to which the Sung dynasty owed its glory was discarded to make way for the painting of everyday life, a realistic representation of the world and its activities, which in Japan gave rise to the Ukioyoyé school, and in China

recruited a series of painters of the first rank outside the limits of academic tradition.

It would be interesting to study the influence of this movement of the China of the time of Ming upon the originators of the Ukioyoyé in Japan. It is certain that the movement on the continent preceded similar manifestations in the island empire by a century, and it is also certain that the Japanese empire was directly influenced by the China of the Ming period. Chinese painters were established in Japan as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There is one of whose family name we are ignorant and who is known only under the appellation of Ju-sue, — in Japanese Josetsu. He left China, where the domination of official art stood in the way of an independent career, carried the traditions of Sung and Yüan art to Japan, gathered pupils about him there, and had the glory of being the founder of that magnificent school of which Sesshiu is the leading exponent. There is only one small painting which can be attributed to Ju-sue with certainty. This is preserved in a Japanese temple. Unfortunately it is a work of small importance which, notwithstanding its intrinsic value, by no means furnishes sufficient information to enable us to pronounce on the authenticity of several other works which are said to be by his hand. We find in the latter an extremely individual art, in accordance with early traditions, but with the addition of something fanciful and unexpected which gives this painter

marked distinction. Having worked outside of China, however, his influence was not felt in the evolution of Chinese painting.

In the seventeenth century Ming art came in contact with the art of the Europeans. The methods and rules of the Italian ateliers of the end of the Renaissance were brought to China by missionary painters whose talent was of a secondary order. The system of monocular perspective and modeling, strongly accentuated by the opposition of light and shade, made a forcible impression on the Chinese mind. Indications of this are found in the Chinese books on art. But the technical methods were too different and the systems too much at variance to meet on any common ground. Notwithstanding its effect upon certain painters, the influence of European painting was on the whole negligible. Father Matteo Ricci worked at the end of the Ming period under the Chinese name of Li Ma-tu and Father Castiglione, at the beginning of the Ch'ing dynasty, used the name of Lang Chü-ning, but, although the former continued to use European methods, while the latter adopted the Chinese procedure, these were only isolated efforts submerged in the great wave of Asiatic evolution.

VIII. THE CH'ING PERIOD—SEVENTEENTH TO TWENTIETH CENTURIES

THE Ch'ing or Manchu dynasty, whose downfall we have recently witnessed, brought no new vigor to China. Barbarians once again invaded the aged and enfeebled empire usurping the methods, history and organization of the preceding periods. The change in China at the end of the seventeenth century was only dynastic. The evolution of Ming tendencies continued, and despite the reorganization undertaken by Kang Hsi and maintained by his two successors, the excessive requirements of the old system, which had been formulated during the Sung epoch and definitely established in the Yüan and Ming periods, were so exacting that irremediable decadence was inevitable. Thenceforward no great changes in the realm of painting need be expected. It only continued its logical evolution.

It is necessary, nevertheless, to lay stress on the value of Chinese painting from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, for an opinion is current that, while there might still be something of value under the Ming dynasty, nothing good was produced under the Ch'ing. It is undeniable that marked signs of

decadence are seen in the latter period, but by the side of some inferior works, others exist which maintain the vitality of the past and the hope of a renaissance.

In refutation of such hasty and ill informed opinion, it is sufficient to recall a number of paintings, signed and dated, of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which dealers or collectors calmly attribute to the eleventh and twelfth.

Chinese painting at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century was still full of vitality. The taste for brilliant color gradually diminished, and the composition became broader and more noble at the hands of certain painters, in whom is seen the revival of the vigorous race of yore. This was the time when Yün Shou-p'ing, more commonly known under the name of Nan-t'ien, painted landscape and flowers with the restraint and power of the old style, and when Shen Nan-p'ing set out for Japan to found a modern Chinese school which was to rival the Ukioyoyé in importance and activity. About them was grouped a large following, foretelling fresh developments.

No support was given to this movement by the new government, which was infatuated with the academic style of the earlier reigns and becoming more and more ignorant as the last years of the nineteenth century approached. In the eighteenth century a comparatively large number of Chinese painters settled in Japan, where they continued the traditions of Ming

PLATE XXII. BEAUTY INHALING THE FRAGRANCE OF A PEONY

Ming Period. Collection of V. Goloubew.

art. The observation of a Nan-t'ien or of a Shen Nan-p'ing was keen and painstaking, but the objectivity and realism now coming to the fore, were conspicuous in their works. No longer was it the world of pure substance and abstract principle that was sought, but the real, everyday world, the world of objective forms studied for themselves, living their own life, on the threshold of which the spirit halted, no longer guided by the old philosophies.

This character was maintained up to the nineteenth century. It is seen in the painting of flowers and landscape as well as in figure painting. These traits are equally apparent in an iris by Nan t'ien and a personage by Huang Yin-piao. The latter, working in the middle of the eighteenth century, evoked the personages of Buddhist and Taoist legend with a skillful brush, but his daring simplifications were more akin to virtuosity than to that deep reflection and freedom from non-essentials which were the glory of the early masters. Herein are discerned the elements of decadence, which are wont to assume precisely this aspect of a mastery over difficulties. For such ends genuine research and the true grasp of form were gradually abandoned.

Calligraphy and the literary style were not overlooked, but they were carried to a point of abstraction that is beyond the province of art. A personage was represented by lines which formed characters in handwriting and which, in drawing the figure, at the same

time wrote a sentence. Doubtless that is a proof of marvelous skill. I agree in assigning such masterpieces to the realm of calligraphy but refuse to admit them to the domain of painting.

This applies as well to the so-called *thumb nail painting* held in high repute under the last dynasty. In this the brush is abandoned and the line is drawn by the finger dipped in ink or color. The painting is done on modern paper of a special kind which partially absorbs the paint, in the manner of blotting paper; this results in weak lines, and ink and color schemes devoid of firmness, in short, in a lack of virility which places such works, notwithstanding their virtuosity, in the category of artisan achievements. These works are numerous in the modern period and constitute what so many regard as Chinese painting. One cannot be too careful in discarding them.

During every period decorative paintings, religious paintings and ancestral paintings made after death, were executed in China by artisans, ordinary workmen at the service of whosoever might engage them. Such work should not be consulted in studying the styles of great periods or the higher manifestations of an art. These paintings were the first to leave China and find their way to Europe. There is no reason for analyzing them here.

To sum up, Chinese painting of the last two centuries still numbers masters of the first rank. This alone indicates that the sacred fire is by no means

PLATE XXIII. HALT OF THE IMPERIAL HUNT

Ming Period. Sixteenth Century. Collection of R. Petrucci.

extinct. Who shall say what future awaits it amidst the profound changes of today? After a period of indecision which lasted for twenty-five years, Japan has found herself anew and is seeking to revive her artistic traditions. It is to be hoped that China will, at all costs, avoid the same mistakes and that she will not be unmindful, as was her neighbor, of the history of the old masters.

CONCLUSION

THIS brief survey has shown how the distinctive features of China's artistic activity were distributed. Though subjected to varying influences, this evolution possesses a unity which is quite as complete as is that of our Western art. In the beginning there were studies, of which we know only through written records. But the relationship existing between writing and painting from the dawn of historic time, permits us to carry our studies of primitive periods very far back, even earlier than the times of the sculptured works. We thus witness the gradual development of that philosophical ideal which has dominated the entire history of Chinese painting, forcing it to search for abstract form, and which averted for so long the advent of triviality and decadence.

The goal sought by Chinese thought had already been reached in painting when, in the third and fourth centuries, we are vouchsafed a glimpse of it. It is a vision of a high order, in which the subtle intellectuality corresponds to a society of refinement whose desires have already assumed extreme proportions. Like Byzantium, heir to Hellenistic art, the China

PLATE XXIV. PAINTING BY CHANG CHENG
Eighteenth Century. Collection of M. Worch.

of the Han dynasty and of Ku K'ai-chih was already progressing toward bold conventions and soft harmonies, in which could be felt both the pride of an intelligence which imposed its will upon Nature, and the weariness following its sustained effort.

This refinement, arising from the exhaustion of a world which even thus retained a certain primitive ruggedness, was succeeded by a stupendous movement which followed in the wake of the preaching of Buddhism. With the new gods we see the first appearance of definite and long-continued foreign influences. Civilization was transformed and took on new life. Then, as in the days of the great forerunners of the Florentine Renaissance, there appeared a whole group of artists, prepared by the art, at once crude and refined, of an earlier people. This group set resolutely to work at the close study of forms, ascertaining the laws of their structure and the conditions of the environment which produced them. The period in which the work of Li Ssŭ-hsün, Li Chao-tao and Wang Wei was produced may be likened to the fifteenth century in Florence with Pisanello, Verocchio, Ghirlandajo and Masaccio. Similar conditions gave birth to a movement that is directly comparable with the Italian movement for, no matter how varied the outward appearances due to differences of race and civilization, the fundamentals of art are the same everywhere and pertain to the same mental attitudes.

The great leaders in periods preceding the T'ang

dynasty paved the way to the culmination which took place in the Sung period, and thus the fruit of that prolonged activity is seen ripening between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries. Through the gropings of the primitive period, the heterodox philosophies and the mystic stirrings of Buddhism, Eastern thought had arrived at an unquestionably noble comprehension of existence. The impersonal mystery of the universe, its mighty principle, its manifold manifestations and the secret which unveils itself in the innermost soul of things are the conceptions which form the inspiration of Chinese painting. These lofty thoughts are the source of that spirituality which declares itself therein with such nobility. The religion to which they are due will seem perhaps, to certain people, to be broader and less trammeled than our own. There is no doubt that the entire Far East was under the spell of its grandeur.

Up to this point art had sounded every depth and attained the highest summits of human achievement. Thenceforward it concerned itself with varying manifestations which were only the different modes of a formula that was still flexible, until the time when — the great inspirations of the past forgotten — there appear signs of a spirit on the quest for realism, emerging from the ancient tradition. This is the distinctive note in the evolution of Chinese painting under the last two dynasties. It would seem as if, even in this guise, a universal need of the mind is being satisfied,

PLATE XXV. TIGER IN A PINE FOREST

Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries. Collection of V. Goloubew.

a need which we, too, have known after experiencing a chilling academicism, and when modern culture had overthrown the ancient idols. Chinese painters have thus completed a round analogous to that traveled by our own artists.

For the Far East as for Europe, the problem now presented is that of a revival. Bent beneath the weight of the prestige of the past, too learned in the last word of culture, modern art is seeking to find itself, groping blindly, full of promising but unfinished works. The time has come when there are signs throughout the world of a desire for a universal civilization, by the reconciling of ancient divergencies. Europe and the Far East bring into contrast the most vigorous traditions in history. Henceforward there is interest for both civilizations in studying and in coming to understand a foreign ideal. Though incomplete, these pages will perhaps help to show that such a mutual comprehension is not impossible and that, if egotistic prejudices are overcome, apparent dissimilarities will be resolved into a profound identity. Thus will arise the elements of a new culture. In coming to understand a mood which so fully reflects an unknown world, the European mind will discover principles which will make it rise superior to itself. May this broad comprehension of human thought lead Europe to estimate with greater justice a civilization numbering its years by thousands, and to refrain from thwarting the fulfillment of its destiny.

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INDEX OF PAINTERS AND PERIODS

The following summary furnishes additional information regarding the painters to whom reference has been made. Those to whom the subject is not familiar will find this of assistance in placing in their proper historical order the different trends which have been indicated elsewhere. They will also find dates useful in comparing, if so desired, the artistic evolution of China with that of Europe. This, however, is only an outline. The names of some great masters are omitted, for I have no wish to overload the margin of a statement which should be kept clear and convenient of access. I trust nevertheless that these few notes in concise form will be of use in connection with the preceding text.

I. BEFORE THE INTERVENTION OF BUDDHISM

The *Bas-reliefs* of the second Han dynasty belong to the second and third centuries of the Christian era.

Ku K'ai-chih, also called *Chang-k'ang* and *Hu-tou*, was born in Wu-hsi in the province of Kiang-su. He lived at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century. His style, resembling that of the Han period, informs us as to the character of painting from the second to the fifth century. It is such as to indicate a long antecedent period of cultivation and development.

Hsieh Ho (479–502), painter of the figure. He wrote a small book setting forth the Six Canons or Requirements of painting. This work informs us regarding the philosophy of art in China of the fifth century.

II. THE INTERVENTION OF BUDDHISM

It is difficult to set an exact date for the first contact of Buddhist with Chinese art. It may be assumed that the influence of Buddhist art began to be felt noticeably in China in the fifth century. In the seventh and eighth centuries it was so widespread as to be definitely established.

III. THE T'ANG DYNASTY

A.D. 618–905

Wu Tao-tzŭ, also called *Wu Tao-yüan*. Born in Honan toward the end of the eighth century. His influence was felt in Japanese art as well as in that of China. He painted landscape, figures and Buddhist subjects.

Li Ssŭ-hsün (651–715 or 720) is considered as the founder of the Northern School. He appears to have felt the influence which Buddhist art brought in its train.

Li Chao-tao, son of Li Ssŭ-hsün, lived at the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth centuries. He is said to have varied from his father's style and even surpassed it.

Wang Wei, also called *Wang Mo-k'i* (699–759), poet, painter and critic. The great reformer of Chinese landscape painting. Considered as the founder of the Southern School and the originator of monochrome painting in Chinese ink.

Han Kan, renowned in the period *t'ien-pao* (742–759). According to tradition he was a pupil of Wang Wei. His school possessed in the highest degree knowledge of the form, characteristics and movements of the horse.

IV. THE SUNG DYNASTY

A.D. 960–1260

Tung Yüan. Tenth century. Landscape painter. He worked in both the Northern and Southern styles.

Chü Jan, Buddhist monk. Tenth century. He was at first influenced by the work of Tung Yüan, but later created an individual style.

Ma Yüan. End of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century. Member of the Academy of Painting. He was the author of a strong and vigorous style which characterized the school founded by him.

Hsia Kuei served in the college at Han-lin in the reign of the Emperor Ning Tsung (1195–1224). He was considered a master of chiaroscuro and atmospheric perspective.

Ma Lin, son of Ma Yüan. Thirteenth century. His work shows that he painted even more in the tradition of the Southern School than his father and uncle.

Li Lung-mien or *Li Kung-lin*. Born at Chou in Ngan-huei. He held public offices, which he resigned in 1100 to retire to the mountain of Lung-mien, where he died in 1106. Noted for his calligraphy as well as for his painting. At one time in his life, under religious influences, he painted a great number of Buddhist figures.

Mi Fei or *Mi Yüan-chang* or *Mi Nan-kung* (1051–1107). Calligraphist, painter and critic. He used strong inking in a style in which the simplification of monochrome is carried to the extreme. He had a son, *Mi Yu-Jen*, who painted in his father's style and lived to an advanced age.

Hui Tsung, emperor, poet, painter and calligraphist. Born in 1082, ascended the throne in 1100, lost his throne in 1125 and died in captivity in 1135. In the first year of his reign he founded the Academy of Calligraphy and Painting. He made a large collection of valuable paintings and rare objects of art which was scattered at the plundering of his capital by the Tartars in 1225.

V. YÜAN DYNASTY

A.D. 1260–1368

Chao Mêng-fu, also called *Tsŭ-ang*. Born in 1254. Man of letters, painter and calligraphist. He was a great landscape painter and in the first rank as a painter of horses.

Ch'ien Hsüan, also called *Ch'ien Shun-chü*, lived at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century. He painted figures, landscape, flowers and birds. He employed the style and methods of the Sung dynasty.

Yen Hui lived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. His paintings were numerous and indicate a master of the first order. He painted many Buddhist and Taoist subjects.

Huang Kung-wang. Fourteenth century. At first influenced by the style of Tung Yüan and Chü Jan, he later acquired an individual style and was one of the great founders of schools in the Yüan period.

Ni Tsan, also called Yün-lin (1301–1374). Man of letters, calligraphist, collector of books and paintings. He is considered to be one of the greatest painters of his time.

VI. THE MING DYNASTY

A.D. 1368–1644

Chou Chih-mien lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. His subjects were principally birds and flowers.

Shên Chou, also called *Shên Ki-nan* or *Shên K'i* (1427–1507). Landscape painter. His composition is at times overladen, as is often seen in Ming art.

Lu Fu lived in the fifteenth century. He made a special study of the plum tree in monochrome. He is comparable to the great Sung masters.

Wang Yüan-chang. Died in 1407 at the age of 73. He painted the bamboo and plum tree in monochrome. He carried on

the Sung tradition, with which he was directly connected, and was the founder of a school.

Wen Chêng-ming (1480–1559), painter, poet and calligraphist. He is often compared with Chao Mêng-fu.

Ju-sue. Known only under this appellation. He lived in the fifteenth century and went to Japan, where his influence was marked. (Japanese *Josetsu.*)

VII. THE CH'ING DYNASTY

1644–1912

Yün Chou-p'ing, appellation *Nan-t'ien,* true name *Yün Ko* (1633–1690). He studied at first under the influence of Wang Shu-ming and Siu Hi. He painted figures, flowers and landscape.

Shen Nan-p'ing lived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He was called to Japan in 1720 and founded there the school of Ming-Ch'ing or the modern Chinese school.

Huang Yin-piau or *Huang-shên.* At the height of his career between 1727 and 1746. He painted landscape and, toward the end of his life, legendary figures of Buddhism and Taoism with a technique that was skillful but often precise and somewhat weak.

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